

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Karen Dworski and I live in Unionville, CT. I am a psychiatric social worker and a member of United Action CT, an interfaith social justice non-profit organization, and Manos Unidas.

I strongly support HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. All Connecticut residents deserve access to medical and mental health services. HUSKY medical insurance for all of those who are income eligible, including undocumented residents, is vital not only for those individuals, but to enable Connecticut to continue to thrive and maintain a productive workforce. As we have seen with the Covid pandemic, we are all connected in regard to public health. Expanding HUSKY to include children and youth up to age 26 will go a long way to enable not just medical treatment access but also mental health treatment. Expanding HUSKY access for undocumented immigrants beyond age 26 would enable health care for parents which is another way to take care of children. And it is simply is the right moral choice.

I have seen how lack of access to medical insurance plays out. I received a call from the daughter of a mother in her 80's who broke her pelvis and was treated in the Emergency Room. She was in chronic pain and was prescribed physical therapy. Her family could not afford to pay for it. I also was part of a group who managed a \$12,000 Go-Fund-Me for an undocumented woman who had kidney cancer. The fund paid for her surgery but would not have been able to pay for radiation and chemotherapy which thankfully she did not need. Others have died because of lack of access to medical insurance to pay for such treatments.

When I think of the critical times in my life when I needed expensive medical treatment - the complicated birth of my daughter, hip replacement - I have been grateful for my medical insurance. Without it, I might not have my daughter, and I would have pain with every step. No one should face these medical conditions without access to treatment. Healthcare truly is a human right.

I urge the committee to pass HB 6616 and to continue to raise the age of coverage to all adults.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Karen Dworski, LCSW